23c Fisher S-4 (no date) 1960 M1 Middle East M1
Bedouin MJ4,15

the group. Yet although tribal solidarity and discipline are conspicuous features, it has been the weakness of Badawin society throughout the ages that political combinations larger than the tribe have been achieved merely for a very short time. An outstanding leader has brought together a number of tribes into one larger unit, but union has proved temporary; and more often than not on the death of the leader, his organisation has dissolved again into smaller groups. Large-scale political organisation is therefore not a feature of Badawin society, and resulting inter-tribal feuds, inveterate warfare, political instability and inconstancy have had an effect not merely on desert and steppe life, but also on that of the settled lands of the arid borders. It is also possible to see why, in the absence of strong internal political organisation, so much of the Middle East has in the past fallen under the control of outside powers.

To each tribe belong certain rights of pasture and occupation. The limits of each tribal territory are carefully defined, and generally comprise a summer and a winter camping ground. Exact size of territory usually has a certain relation to the physical force and prestige commanded by each tribe, and limits therefore vary from one period to another. Weaker tribes seek 'protection' from a larger.

As a sample of tribal division, the distribution of Badawin in Syria is given below. It should be noted that in certain instances tribal territories cross international frontiers, and thus there arise special problems of administration. Agreements have been concluded between the governments concerned, whereby nomads in effect assume temporarily the nationality of the country in which they find themselves.

Because of the necessity for constant movement, the material culture of the Badawin is poor. Chief possession of the tribesman, after his animals, is a tent, usually black, and woven of camel or goat hair. When in good repair, these tents are quite waterproof—sufficient to withstand the infrequent, but severe downpours which occur—and the size of the tent, shown by the number of tent poles used, is an indication of the affluence and social standing of the owner. The interior is divided, on the right for men, and on the left for women. One side away from the wind is usually left open, with a coffee hearth in front. The coffee hearth is the social centre of the household; and the head of the family, although leaving the entire preparation of food to his womenfolk, will himself undertake the preparation and serving of coffee. True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar, but

True Bedu coffee is strong, devoid of milk or sugar but flavoured with herbs; and its consumption is the occasion of much social activity—the rounding off of the day, and an opportunity for discussion, and the reception of guests. For the Badawin, if not for city dwellers, coffee is truly the 'wine of Islam', and the equipment of all Badawin households includes at least one carpet, which is spread before the hearth, a mortar, and coffee pots and cups. A few cooking pots, and one or two large trays and bowls for communal eating make up the remainder of the culinary equipment.

Clothing of the Badawin is simple. A long robe of thick material is the principal, sometimes in fact the only, garment. In winter a waterproof cloak of woven camel hair is worn. A voluminous headcloth, held in place by a rope or band, is wound round the head so as to give protection to the face and neck, and rawhide, heelless sandals are worn on the feet.

Water is usually too precious for much washing[1]—indeed, the Koran permits the ceremonial use of sand in the daily ablutions which are enjoined on all Moslems—and animal urine is frequently used as a substitute. Badawin food is monotonous and scanty. Most important are milk products: curds, buttermilk, various kinds of cheese —of which *labné*, a kind of cream cheese, is the most widespread— and *samné*, or butter. In addition, wheat, barley, and occasionally a little rice are obtained by barter, blackmail, or brigandage from agriculturalists, or else grown very sporadically by the nomads themselves.[2] Small amounts of dried fruit, usually dates, are also eaten. Meat is provided only as a great luxury, since animals themselves are in effect a kind of fixed capital—owners must live from the yield, not upon the animal itself. Apart, then, from occasions of high festival, when special slaughtering takes place, only those animals that die naturally are eaten.

Meals are served first to the older men of the tent, each man using his dagger as a knife, and fingers as a fork,[3] after which, when they are satisfied, it is the turn of the younger men and boys. Later still come the women, and finally the girls—the sexes never intermingling during meals. On occasion when supplies are plentiful, the Badawin

[1] It has been said of a present-day certain Wahhabi tribe of Arabia that all adult members have at least once in their lifetime been forced to exist on water taken from the hump of a camel.

[2] Patches of ground are roughly sown with grain, and later in the year tribesmen return to harvest the crop.

[3] As far as possible, use of the left hand is avoided in polite Arab society—this hand is employed for menial and unpleasant tasks.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Dawn in Camp

tired and dozed off again. Again I woke, and again I dozed off, till the barking of the dogs became a sort of rising and falling echo in my tired and sleepy brain. Once I heard the camels, which were kneeling close behind Salim's tent, jump up in alarm and bolt 50 yards, but the reassuring voice of Salim calmed them, and I dropped off to sleep again. Presently I heard him shouting: *Ya Nasir, shunnu illi khawaf al bil?* (Oh Nasir, what frightened the camels?). *Ma'aku shai*, came the reply (Nothing at all). I went on dozing the night long, hearing many and strange sounds, but too tired to move. It is always thus, my first night with my Badawin friends; I cannot sleep. Before dawn I heard Salim calling to prayer, and shortly afterwards, though it was still very dark, the goatskin of milk, rocked by one of the women to make curdled milk (*leben*) and butter, started its song. Rug-rug-rug-rug, the skin protested, and yet again, Rug-rug-rug. It was the old sound I knew so well, and it gave me a strange feeling of homeliness and comfort. They were awake before daylight, these simple people; they never seem to sleep—they also had prayed, and now they were watching for the dawn.

Presently I heard the shepherds calling their flocks of sheep together, and the camelmen talking to their camels. Both sheep and camels had slept in the open in front of Salim's and Dhuwaihi's tents, the ewes close to their young. *Hirr, hirr*, cried Falâh, as he started calling the mother sheep to feed their lambs, before going out to graze for the day. The lambs all began to bleat at once, it was the hour of their morning meal. After this they will get nothing till nightfall, so they must drink now deep and well. Presently, with the first glimmer of dawn the daily counting of the sheep began. Aha! a cry, "Ya Salim, there are two short. Come quick, a ewe and a lamb are missing." A hurrying of feet, then eager talking. A further cry, "A wolf, it is a wolf". "A wolf has done this in the night." From right under their noses, a he- and she-wolf had clearly visited the camp and carried off the animals in the dark. A quick cast round and the enemies' pug-marks were found. The he-wolf had cleverly given the watch-dogs his scent on the side from which the wind was blowing, and as soon as the dogs had rushed after him into the night his cunning spouse had crawled close up to the tents on the other side, much as a cat crouches and creeps after a mouse (except that the wolf seems

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

264 up also and wash their hands in token of having finished. The result is that to avoid having to leave the table hungry, guests learn to bolt their food in most harmful style.

272 The favourite drinks among sheep-owning Badawin are *leben* (butter-milk) and *roba* (thick curdled milk). The shepherd tribes (Shawáwi) prepare their *leben* from sheep's milk, the camel tribes (Bádia) from camels' milk. The latter has to be boiled first, before it is shaken up in skins. Normally a camel-owning tribe will give a guest plain camels' milk to drink. *Leben* is not often offered.

Camels' milk has no cream on it, and no butter can be got from it. It is a purgative, and should be taken in moderation by European travellers or persons not used to it.

MEALS

A Badawin lunch or dinner

264 252 Among the Badawin proper the banquet of a shaikh is served on a large, round, tinned copper tray (*sanîya*) on which is piled up, a foot high, boiled rice covered with yellow gravy made from the fat of the sheep, and on top of all is placed a boiled young sheep or lamb (always a male). If the shaikh happens to favour Najd manners and customs, the tray will stand on a pedestal (all in one piece) called *sanîya abu kursi*; this is shaped thus:

and translated means "The tray, father of the chair". The whole is now placed on a *sifra* or circular mat, corresponding to our tablecloth.

The Badawin call the cooked rice *'aysh* and the whole sheep *dhabîhah* or *tulli* (lamb). Both are cooked rather crudely and for our taste there is usually far too much *semn* or *dehen* (clarified butter) mixed with the cooking. The meat is usually rather tough, unless a young lamb happens to have been killed. Nevertheless, if you are 264 hungry this form of banquet tastes remarkably good. The most tasty bits of meat and the tenderest are the strips along both sides of the

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI
Bc douins MJ4

B 574 431 women of the tent. This makes him their friend for life. I always made a point of trying to do this in Kuwait.

A dinner party given by a townsman (hadhari) or better-class semi-nomad tribesman ('arabdar)

B 252 264 K 252 264 This is a very much grander affair than the preceding, and the rice is usually of the *ambar bu* kind from Iraq or North Iran. After boiling, the whole sheep is browned all over by plunging it in boiling *dehen* or *semen* (clarified butter). It may be even baked in a baker's oven, when it is known as *lahm mashwi*.

Over the rice is spread a thin layer of hot sultanas, shredded onions (fried), gram and other spices. Dried pomegranate seeds are often introduced (an unpleasant habit, as grit like sand-grains seems to have got into the food). The whole dish is surrounded with plates, or small bowls, containing various meat dishes, vegetables, sweetmeats and fruit (usually cut-up melon). The number of these dishes increases with the importance and wealth of the host. The following are the names of the more important dishes thus served:

(*a*) *Marag*—a tasty brown stew containing small lumps of meat, tomatoes (*tamáta*), egg-plant (*baitan-jan*), and ladies' fingers (*bámia*).

(*b*) *Shaikh Mahshi*—Young white pumpkins, or preferably large cucumbers, stuffed with rice, nuts, and minced meat.

(*c*) *Baragh* or *Dólma*—A mash of rice and meat wrapped up in young vine leaves, and thoroughly boiled. It is delicious to the taste. (Originally from Turkey.)

(*d*) *Tamáta marag*— is like (*a*) above, but made of tomato and onion sauce.

(*e*) *Dólmat*—Stuffed onions like (*c*) above.

(*f*) *Kabáb*—Meat, rice and sultana rissoles.

(*g*) *Mahallibi*—Ground rice or arrowroot cooked in milk and flavoured with cardamum, and sometimes with chopped pistachio nuts.

(*h*) *Mahallibi wa Záfáran*—Like (*g*) mixed with saffron to colour it yellow.

(*i*) *Harís*—A kind of crushed corn-and-meat porridge, very nourishing.

B 264 K 264 Interspersed with the above are plates of dates (*tamar*), bowls of sour milk (*leben*), grapes, sections of melon (if in season), also large flat thin wafers of unleavened bread or thick round flat oven-made